

Connect

supporting student participation

35th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

*Number 210
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**35
Years**



Student Voice Alliance researching

Resources:

- Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric
- *Students as Learning Partners* video
- "Putting the Participation back into Representation" ... archive of 1986
- NSW: Take the Lead on Leadership
- WA: Youth Participation Resources
- VicSRC 'Teach the Teacher' Worker
- *Connect* ... on facebook ... archived ... available on-line ... access to other resources on-line ...
- NSW Central Coast Student Voice Alliance
- VicSRC Recognition Award Winners
- Primary SRC: Exploring student and staff views
- Training an Entire Year Level?
- 23rd International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC)
- VicSRC: 2014 Congress Report; 2014 Overview
- VISTA: Protocols for Running a Meeting

Connect

Number 210: December 2014

- 3 **Students plan research and action on mental health**
Central Coast Student Voice Alliance, NSW *Allison Beattie*
- 5 **Exploring staff and student voices about an SRC**
Northern Suburban Fringe P-12 College, Vic *Laura Gazetas*
- 10 **VISTA: SRC Meeting Protocols; VISTA News** *Dianne Parkinson*
- 11 **Leadership training for an entire year level** *David Mould*
- 12 **Putting the participation back into representation**
1986 archive re *Credit and Recognition* *Roger Holdsworth*
- 14 **VicSRC Recognition Awards:** *VicSRC; Margaret Tran*
- 16 **Student Leader of the Year** *Sophie Williams*
- 18 **Teacher Advisor: Joanne Howe** *Nhan-My Nguyen, Taran Giddey*
- 20 **SRC of Year: Bendigo SE College** *Brady Price, Eva Marchingo*
- 22 **Whole School Focus: Malvern Central School** *JSC Team*
- 26 **Group Action: Fitzroy HS** *Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective*
- 27 **VicSRC: 2014 in Review; Regional Conferences 2015; Meet the Teach the Teacher Project Officer; Congress 2014 Report**
- 29 **News & Reviews:**
Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric; *Are our learners deeply engaged* (AITSL *Learning Frontiers*); Student Action Teams on web; Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group; *Connect* facebook page; Take the Lead on Leadership (NSW); *Students as Learning Partners* Video; WA Resources to Enhance Youth Participation
- 33 **Education Needs Communities** *Birgit Baader*
International Democratic Education Conference 2015: NZ
- 34 **Connect Publications Order Form**
- 35 **CLEARINGHOUSE:** Local and Overseas Publications; Websites; Contribute to *Connect*; *Connect* on EBSCO

Cover:

At the NSW Central Coast Student Voice Alliance

Cover photo (and photos on pages 3-4) by Gary Wright

Why does Connect exist?

Connect has been published bi-monthly since 1979.

It aims to:

- document student participation approaches and initiatives;
- support reflective practices;
- develop and share resources.

Connect:

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This Issue:

35
Years

Late in 1979, while teaching full-time at Lynall Hall Community School, I started a small newsletter to share stories and resources about initiatives that I and others had been involved in: the student-run community newspaper *Ascolta*; a cross-age tutoring program; Lynall Hall itself.

I had been inspired by a visit to a 'students as cultural journalists' conference in the US (and realising that it was about pedagogical principles rather than oral history), and finding a networking magazine there called *Hands On*. I thought it would be useful for us to do likewise.

This was way before computers - or even accessible photocopiers. So copies of *Connect* were typed and initially roneoed - and mailed out to interested people. For \$5 a year for quite a while.

Now, 35 years later, I'm still committed to the same general purposes for *Connect*, but maybe we're all a little 'sharper' in understanding what it is we're committed to. *Connect* remains the independent, grass-roots 'practice journal' it has always been, supported by your contributions and stories. This is issue #210 - and all back issues are still available at <http://research.acer.edu.au/connect/>

In those 210 issues you'll find stories about practice, written by students, teachers and others, reviews (and some development) of resources and some critiques and musings around what **student participation** means.

Over the years, many words and phrases have been used in this area: *student involvement*, *student engagement*, *student leadership*, *student representation*, *student participation*, *student-adult partnerships* and, more recently, *student voice*. Sometimes qualifiers are added: '*meaningful student involvement*'; '*authentic participation*'; '*participatory representation*' - and so on. All of these have implications and conceptual 'baggage'. I still prefer '*participation*', not least because it has a well-worked literature including contributions from Hart, Shier, de Kort, Fielding etc.

But I'm also very aware that we must continue to explore the **purpose** of such participation - and that this is also buried in the words we use. We can recognise that participatory approaches will have enormous benefits for the individual (and the research supports this strongly), and that student feedback will enable teachers to teach better, and that students know things that teachers don't know ... while all of these are totally valid ... the core purpose, to me, remains no less than the **transformation of the purposes and processes of learning and teaching**. Student participation, at its core, is about changing how classrooms and schools operate, recognising both that all students and teachers should operate in relationships that respect what each brings to construct learning, but also that students and teachers together can be **doing** important things **as** they learn (together). Hence, alongside the phrase 'student participation', the phrase '**real roles of value for students**' - and all that implies - remains vital for me.

Next Issue ...

With the next issue of *Connect*, we start the 36th year of publication! The deadline is the **end of January** for stories to start a new school year. Already there are some stories in the pipeline - but I'd love you to spend your holidays writing for others, and documenting your initiatives. Yep - a long call I know! And in between ... have a great break!

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #211: February 2015
Deadline for material: end of January, 2015

Students plan research and action on mental health



Students from the public secondary schools on the NSW Central Coast are planning action to identify and improve student mental health and wellbeing in their schools and communities. They met recently to identify their specific topics of concern, learn how to investigate these, and begin to plan the initiatives they can take.

The **Central Coast Student Voice Alliance** Conference Day in mid November brought together about 60 students (with their teachers) from these schools located across the Central Coast area of NSW. This learning alliance comprises two multi-campus colleges, an academically selective school, a K-12 community school and ten comprehensive 7-12 high schools.

Students and teachers had attended two previous meetings held on school sites, and developed ideas about student voice and its possibility and power within the schools. Students had previously discussed the range of issues of concern to them, and prioritised these. They had decided that 'mental health' was the commonality between their schools' concerns.

This conference day was a significant step forward in sharing and building the profile and presence of student voice in our schools. Its purpose was to provide opportunities for students and teachers to develop skills and knowledge in research techniques so that students would be able to take the lead in addressing the various mental health related issues they were identifying; one student said: *"The purpose of the day was to discover a focus point and plan a long-term project"*.

The day started with a welcome to country, and a 'research'-oriented 'getting to know you' activity: *'is there anything in star-signs?'* Then the 'serious' work began. During the day, we were introduced to **DIVAE**, a framework for action planning. For each of the five steps of this acronym: **Defining, Investigating, Visioning, Actioning and Evaluating**, we were involved in team activities led by school student leaders.

We started by **Defining** our topics more precisely. What does 'mental health' mean? Is there a specific aspect of this that's of interest or concern to us? Why is this being chosen as a topic? What are we responding to

– what symptoms? What are the underlying causes?

The schools had different foci: with one, the concern was with **bullying**; with several, it was about **stress and anxiety**.

This discussion led naturally to students sharing, within school groups, what they already knew about their focus. But they were also careful to 'doubt' and challenge assumptions: do we *really* know that? So a list of questions began to be formed – things we need and want to find out.

As the students present discussed and shared these ideas, they were also aware that they were only a small group from the student team who might be addressing these issues back at school. Therefore, the role of the students present at the conference was to work through and understand these steps in order to lead and teach other students, back at school, about the approaches – so that decisions were made, at school, with a broader group.

The questions being identified formed a 'research' agenda; and the central part of the day was around ways to **Investigate** and answer these questions. Six different research



methods were introduced to the group by researcher and teacher Eve Mayes: *completing a survey; responding to photographs; completing silent conversations; mapping location and prevalence; ranking possible issues; and discussing written scenarios*.

Small mixed groups of students moved through a series of 'research stations' based around these methods. Students led these stations, each introducing their method (around a topic of 'bullying'), facilitating discussions or activities, and then discussing positive and negatives about the method. Participants were asked to consider the enjoyment of the research approach, what could be found out, its advantages and disadvantages, the skills needed by the facilitator, and ways to record the data.

After all students had been through a number of these stations, they returned to their school groups to share observations and comparisons, and begin to plan the specific approaches they might use back at school to investigate their topic. They also reflected on how they might teach other students about the methods.



Vision Statements

In the afternoon, schools continued to plan their approaches. An important start would be to develop a **Vision** statement about what they wanted their school, community or world to be like – in their topic area. They formed first drafts of these **Vision** statements and all schools read these to the conference. Here are some examples:



"A school in which there's no place for bullying; where everyone is happy and working together; where there is equality and no-one is left behind - no fights, everyone gets a chance, equal opportunities, more support."

"Our vision is to eliminate stress and anxiety from our school and ensure all students feel capable and supported while still understanding the importance of study and focus."

"At our school the topic that we want to deal with is anxiety through the pressure of tests and assignments. We feel that students at our school place too much pressure on themselves to succeed and find managing the stress and anxiety of assignments difficult. Our vision is a school in which anxiety is managed and students are more comfortable and confident in their ability to achieve in all tests and assignments."

Finally, they looked ahead, to when they would move from their **Vision** to identifying what needed to change (their **goals**) and the **Action** they could take to achieve this. And further down the track: asking the question: what have we achieved? What helped us or diverted us? – **Evaluating** their initiatives.

School Plans

It was important that the students left with practical plans. These would start with telling other students about the day, and working to 'train' them in these **definition** and **investigation** steps. Who would these students be? The answers would be different from school to school: the Student Representative Council; a Student Action Team; a special group of students drawn together for the initiative. And it would be important to consider **when** and **how** they might meet within schools.

Students from one school later reported: "After selecting a new student action team, our next step will be to survey the students and find their opinions on this topic. We will utilise the survey results to select the necessary focus groups to gain further information. Once we gather this data we will persevere to implement positive changes into our school."

The **Student Voice Alliance** is committed to meet again at regular intervals. In Term 1 2015, students will come together to share progress and plans. A student reported: "Our next steps are to plan and have our own activity - and have a trial before our next Student Voice Alliance meeting." Later in 2015 they will report on their research, and begin the journey to plan and implement their action in response to what they find out. And still later, they will tell each other what they've done – and what they've achieved.

Feedback

The feedback from the day has been positive. Participants liked:

"Meeting different students from different schools, and learning different ways to make changes in our schools."

"Having mixed school groups and hands on activities."

"The students taking the lead and feeling the rewards of their ownership."

"The examples of activities to promote student voice."

"Allowing students to discuss and investigate problems that affect schools all over the Central Coast."

Similarly, other students commented on the value of the Alliance: "The Student Voice Alliance is valuable to us because it enables us to discuss ideas and options/opportunities with other schools across the Central Coast. It provides us with contacts and friends to continue to make and achieve goals for student voice in our school."

"Most importantly, it allows us to see other schools' ideas and share 'what works' and how to put ideas into action. It makes us feel like anything is possible and we know where we can get advice and ideas from students with similar aspirations for their schools."

"The Student Voice Alliance is important to us because it forms links between different schools and gives us advice and different viewpoints. It lifts the overall quality of our work."

The teachers who accompanied the students reflected on what the school took away:

"There is a range of research methods possible to use with students."

"The Alliance is a positive experience."

"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When students come together, magic happens."

"Allowing students to lead with their own ideas and the importance of research."

"Students have a strong opinion on what they are looking for in a school and how to achieve that. We need to let them take an element of control."

"Teachers and students can have a difference of opinion but can make it work with positive communicating."

"The students can do a lot of the action team without me. I have always been heavily involved in facilitating the training and running the project, but today has shown me that the students are able to facilitate activities and to train their peers."

The day was filmed for **ClassMoviesTV** and we'll let you know when that's available ... and we'll also let you know about development of the students' exciting research and action plans.

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Exploring staff and student voices on the value of an SRC

Most schools in Victoria have some sort of student organisation to represent and work on behalf of students. They are made up of a group of students who represent student views within the school (VicSRC and DEECD, 2010). There are several reasons for having a Student Representative Council (SRC), and they all have to do with students' participation in what happens within the school and its community (*ibid*).

"Students are more likely to develop a strong commitment to the community and its future if they are able and permitted to take part in determining its direction. Participation in decision-making at the school level is a means through which students are able to develop responsibility and experience the democratic process" (DEECD, 2008).

In our school, there has been no clear leadership program that provides the opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills until they reach Year 6. So, in 2013, I undertook an action research project to explore the views in the school about developing student voice and student leadership within a Student Representative Council.

The School's Improvement Framework has noted that student leadership was an area that needed to be developed: data indicated that students were not feeling connected with the school and that school engagement was low. However, before leaping into establishing some form of Student Representative Council, I needed to explore whether the staff and students saw the need of such a Council.

Our school is a Catholic Prep to Year 12 school on the northern fringe of Melbourne, in a growth corridor area. In 2013 the College had an enrolment of 1320 students from Prep to Year 12, and is growing by approximately 140 students per year. The College recently changed from a Junior, Middle and Senior school approach to a Primary Campus (Prep to Year 6) and a Secondary Campus (Year 7 to Year 12).

The school's student leadership program had also been altered to follow these changes. Until 2012, the Year 4 students had the opportunities to apply for leadership positions in the Sports Guilds and for two positions as Junior School Captains. However, with the school changes, students could not apply for a leadership position until they reached Year 6. Therefore, there were no clear leadership program that provided the opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills until they reached Year 6.

I wanted to make sure we were engaging the capacities and multiple voices in our schools (DEECD, 2007), involving young people in a true partnership with adults so that they can influence what happens to them at school, and become meaningfully involved in their own learning and in school improvement (*ibid*). The purpose of accessing and facilitating student voice in this sense is to improve the engagement of students and the outcomes of their learning.

Student Voice

Recent research has indicated growing awareness in giving voice to student interests and perspectives (Khushu, 2011). Hargreaves (2004) says an active student voice leads to an increase in engagement, participation, meta-cognitive skills, responsibility, relationships and social skills of students, which in turn assists teachers and students to develop a shared, rich vocabulary to talk about learning (Khushu, 2011). A strong student

voice can create a productive and thinking classroom where students take responsibility for their learning.

Other studies indicate that students themselves yearn for deeper engagement throughout their education (Kushman, 1997). Students want to participate in activities that they care about. Fielding & Rudduck (2002) maintain that if schools are to reflect the different capabilities of this new generation, they need to respond to 'repeated calls from students for responsibility, more opportunities to contribute to decision-making, more opportunities for dialogue about learning and the conditions of learning'.

When schools engage student voices, they create opportunities to facilitate a stronger sense of membership, so that students feel more positive about school, respect and self-worth (*ibid*). By engaging in student voice, students also feel positive about themselves as learners, so that they are better able to manage their own progress in learning agency and in turn, students realise that they can have impact on things that matter to them in school (*ibid*).

The concept of student leadership has recently been described as intrinsic to student engagement (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007). Student leadership promotes student engagement in schools.

Many researchers affirm the benefits of student leadership programs. Chapman and Aspin (2004) argue that developing student leadership through specific programs is crucial to promoting social responsibility, community leadership, active citizenship and service leadership. Equipping students with leadership qualities provides them with the ability to act in roles of responsibility with integrity and honesty (Thomson, 2012). It fosters a sense of vision and purpose, and allows students to work with others to determine and achieve collective goals (*ibid*). It also allows students to take on responsibilities and use decision-making skills in order

to carry a project through to a successful conclusion.

Student Representative Councils

Most schools in Victoria have some form of Student Representative Council (SRC) that represents the voice of the students in the school. Better decisions are made within a school (and elsewhere) if everyone who is affected by those decisions is involved in making them in some way; student learning and school results are improved in schools where students are actively represented in decision-making; schools where there is active participation by students (through SRCs and other means), are generally happier and safer places, with better relationships between all members of the school community; and it's recognised internationally that young people have a right to be consulted and to have their voices heard about decisions that affect them (VicSRC and DEECD, 2010).

Project Aims

My project's long-term goal was to develop student voice through student leadership across the students in our primary school.

My short-term aims were to explore whether staff and students believed that students should be given an opportunity to have a say; to investigate whether students and staff saw the value of a Student Representative Council (SRC); and to increase student voice itself through focus groups and collaborative student action groups.

These aims were guided by an overarching researching question: *Do students and staff see the value of a Student Representative Council (SRC) in the Primary School?*

Process

I started by meeting with the Deputy Principal of the Primary School and the Head of Primary to discuss with them some ideas I had in relation to student wellbeing in our school after examining the School Improvement Framework and the school's Data. We discussed proposed aims, the direction of the project and timeline of the project. My ideas were met with enthusiasm and support.

I then presented some background information about student voice, student leadership, SRC and its benefits at a primary leadership meeting. Most people were very supportive and thought that this was something worth finding out

about. It was suggested that I work with the Guild (Sports) Coordinator and examine how the roles of SRC and Guild Captains can be connected together.

So I met with the Guild Coordinator and discussed the student leadership program in greater depth. We examined the role descriptions of the Guild Captains and explored how a Student Representative Council would be different and also how it would complement the Guild Captain roles. We both felt that having a SRC would be very beneficial for the students and the school.

I asked teachers to choose two students from their classes to form a student collaborative group. The students nominated themselves in each of these classes and then the students of the class chose which two people would be the best to represent their class. This group consisted of two students from each of Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, with the two students from Year 6 being the school captains for 2013.

In their first meeting, the students participated in a number of get to know you games through a circle time format. Later, as the students were starting to feel more comfortable, I then posed the question: *'Do you think we (students) should have more of a say at school?'* Initially, the students did not know what the concept *'have more of a say'* meant. So we unpacked that term until I felt that they had an understanding of what it meant. I then posed the next question: *'What do we want to have more of a say on?'* Each student provided at least one response for this. From this we then explored the question: *'Do you think other students would want to have more of a say and how can we find this out?'* The students decided to interview the Year 3 to 6 classes at the next level assembly using these questions.

Students Interviewing Peers in Years 3 to 6

The students attended each year level assembly with the permission of the year level coordinator. At each assembly, they began by discussing what student voice was. This was important, given that the student group didn't know what the concept meant when it was first introduced. They then asked: *'Do you think we should have more of a say at school?'* and: *'What do you want to have more of a say on?'* The students recorded

what their peers said in note form. At my next meeting with the group, we examined and analysed the results and found some common things that were said at each year level (see later).

Developing a Student Survey

Following the year level interviews, the student group decided that we still needed to find more information about student leadership and student voice. So together we wrote some statements and decided that we would like one class in each year level of Year 3 to 6 to participate in a survey. The students also suggested that there should be a teacher survey to gather an insight into teachers' views on student voice and student leadership at our school.

Teacher Survey

The statements from the student survey were changed slightly for the teacher survey – but basically mirrored these. All teachers were briefed at a whole school staff meeting on the process and asked to participate in the survey about their own thoughts and perspectives on these topics. This survey was emailed to them via survey monkey to complete. All surveys were anonymous.

Final Student and Teacher Group Meetings

The student group discussed the student surveys (also done through survey monkey) drew conclusions from the results. The project and its successes were discussed. Responses were recorded on an interactive whiteboard.

The teacher surveys were presented to the staff group and results discussed, along with the project to date and its successes. Staff responses were recorded.

Recording

During the first student meeting, notes were recorded while the students were discussing question posed to them. These notes were recorded with the student's name beside it on an interactive whiteboard so all members of the group could see. After the meeting, I wrote a lengthy journal entry about how the session went and my thoughts and findings from it.

Students provided valuable data while interviewing the Year 3 to 6 students. They recorded their responses using data charts that they created. The individual surveys for the Year 3 to 6 students were created through survey

monkey, and the students completed the survey during class time. The teacher surveys were also administered through survey monkey and completed during their own time. All of these results were tabulated and averages were calculated through this data.

In the final stages of this project, the students reflected on the results they had obtained and conclusions were made from the student and teacher surveys. The students wrote a short reflection on their findings, about their challenges and what they enjoyed. They also reflected on their own individual learning through the process and noted some difficulties that they were faced with. Students were invited to share their views about the project's processes and outcomes. This information was digitally recorded on my iPhone and later summarised, and the key themes that emerged and recurred were identified.

Results

Initial Student Interview

When the student group collated and discussed the data from their interviews, they found that most students wanted to have a say in each year level: 66 out of 138 Year 2 students; 75 out of 139 Year 4 students; 85 out of 138 Year 5 students; and 103 out of 11 Year 6 students. They speculated as to why the proportion of students increased as the year level got higher.

in response to: *'Why do we want to have a say at school?'*, students found:

- In Year 3, most of the students wanted to have more of a say at school because they were not happy with the amount of excursions, visual art time allocated to them, and the no tackling rule in the playground. They wanted to be given more playing areas and be provided with more opportunities to have more fun and play more games.
- In Year 4, students felt that there were times when things were unfair, they thought that sport was boring, and they wanted more art and new things at school. They also wanted to have a say on the changing of the food times and to reduce the subjects down to four periods rather than five periods.
- In Year 5, the students wanted to get more involved with school and not feel left out. They wanted to have

a say in decisions made at school and contribute more of their ideas to the school.

- In Year 6, the students wanted there to be more fairness with the school rules and be involved in more decisions made at school such as subject choice, the canteen and changing of lunch times. They also wanted opportunities to talk to the secondary students.

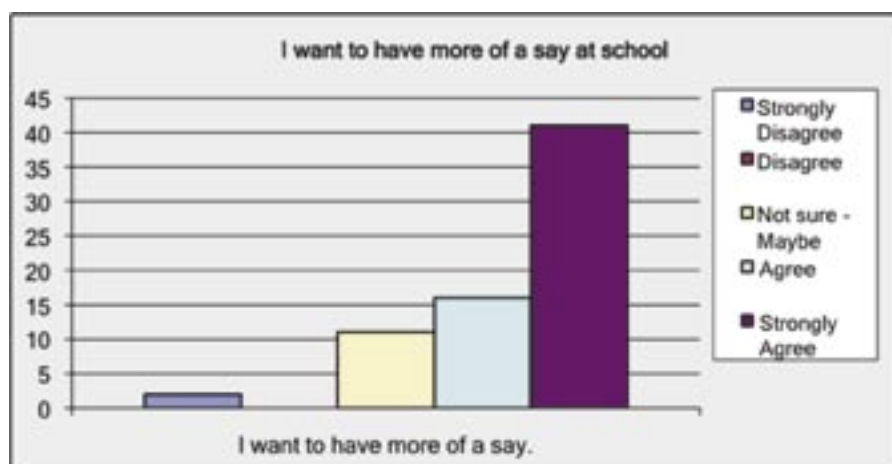
The student group collated the responses and found common threads.

Similar responses were collated on the question: *'What would you like to have more of a say on?'*

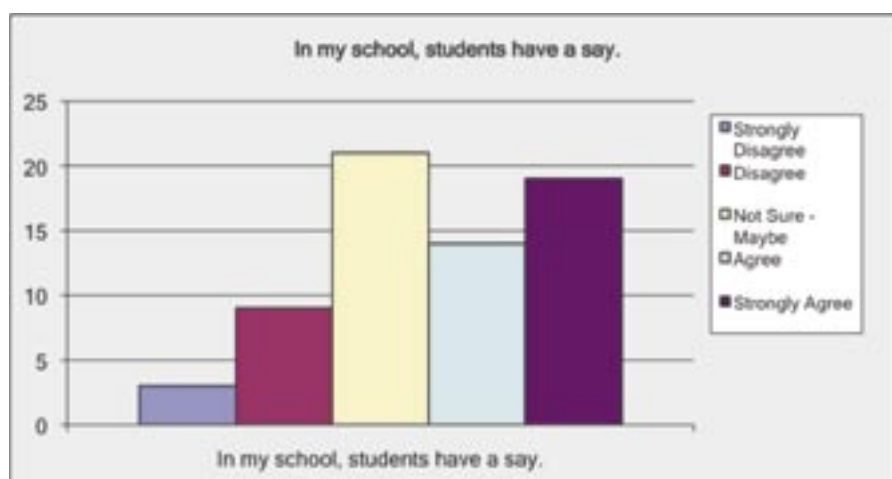
- Year 3 students: school lunchtime clubs such as drawing and computer clubs; more casual clothes days and fundraisers.
- Year 4 students: what sports they learn; more sports competitions; more casual clothes days; longer lunches; the opportunity to use the school canteen.
- Year 5 students: the school structure such as more books in the library, participate in more art lessons, have shorter periods, be offered more subjects and begin school earlier; better toilet paper in the boys' and girls' toilets.
- Year 6 students: school uniform, school rules and choices of subjects; more casual clothes days.
- All students in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 suggested that they would like to have less homework.

Student Survey

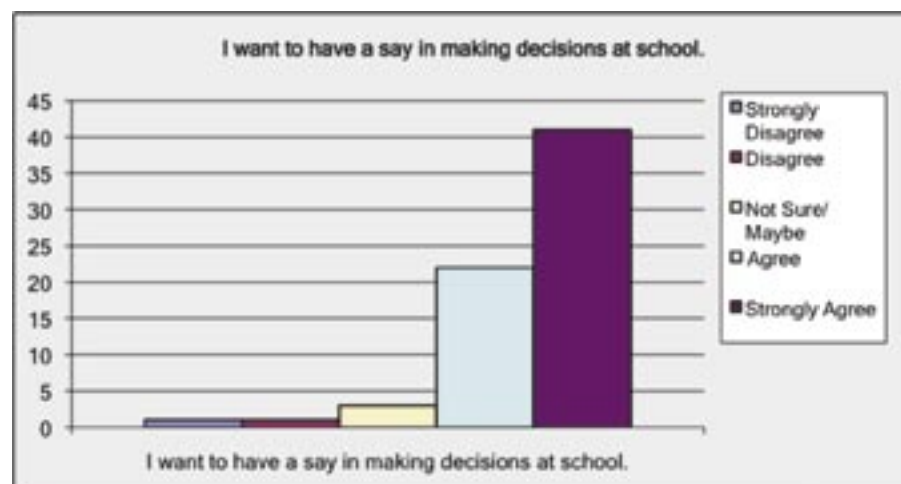
A total of 68 students responded to the on-line survey. Responding to: *'I want to have more of a say at school'*, 57 out of the 68 students agreed, 11 were unsure and two strongly disagreed.



On: *'In my school students have a say'*, 33 students believed that they had a say at school, 21 students were unsure and 12 students disagreed.



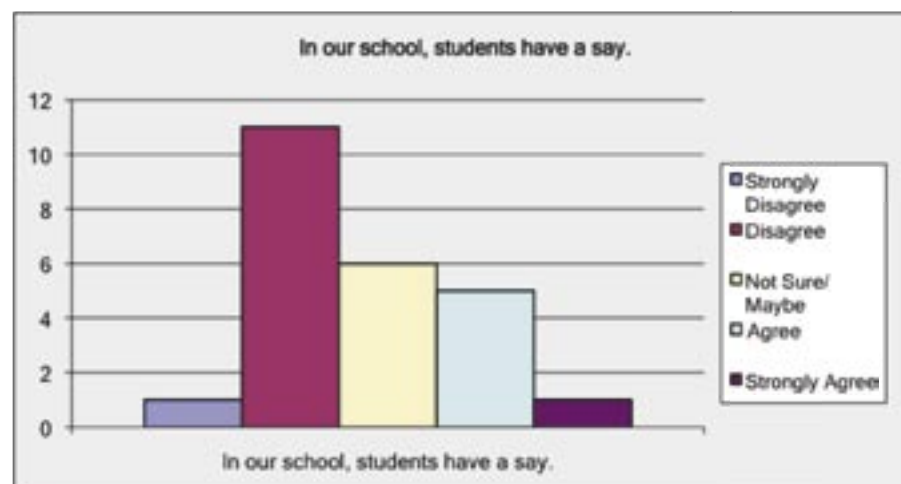
Looking forward and responding to: *'I want to have a say in making decisions at school'*, 63 students of the 68 students agreed or strongly agreed.



In other student survey results, 36 students agreed that teachers valued what students had to say, 19 were unsure and nine disagreed. Overall, 28 students did not believe that teachers valued what students had to say. 57 students believed that they had a lot to offer the school; 51 agreed that they wanted to have more responsibilities at school; and 51 stated that they did not agree with some decisions that were made at school.

Teacher Survey

On the teacher survey, 28 of the 29 teachers responding believed that students should have more of a say at school, with only one disagreeing. 12 of these teachers thought that students did not have a say, while six were unsure and six agreed that students had a say at our school.



In other results from the teacher survey, 16 teachers believed that students were encouraged to say what they thought, but 25% of respondents disagreed. 19 teachers agreed that teachers valued what students had to say, but three were unsure and two disagreed. 19 teachers agreed that students should be more involved with decisions made at school with only one teacher disagreeing.

Only four teachers strongly agreed that teachers valued what students had to say. However, nine teachers strongly agreed that students should be involved in decision-making decisions. Seven teachers agreed that the school provided opportunities for students to develop leadership qualities, seven were unsure and 10 disagreed. All teachers believed that students should have more responsibilities in our school, but 10 of them believed that the school did not provide enough opportunities to develop leadership qualities.

Discussion

When I first asked students whether they should have a say, they were initially confused by the question. I had to provide examples of what student voice is. Because the school had done very little work student voice, this was reflected in the student survey results. Large numbers of students were unsure as to whether their school provided opportunities for students to have a voice, and this also coincided with the total number of students that wanted to have a say. As the students got older, more of them wanted to have say, and this could be related to their understanding of student voice.

Overall, students said that they would like to have a say on choices at school, sports, being involved in school decision-making processes and school rules. Students were pleased when their voices were heard. Even though the number of students who wanted to have a say were lower in Years 3 and 4, these students still provided a large number of suggestions on what they would like to have a say on.

Student representation can be tokenistic: about students being seen to be involved in school processes rather than being active partners of change (Thomson, 2012). In other schools, there are genuine attempts to involve students within decision-making processes (Robinson & Taylor, 2013).

Our results show that students want to be actively involved in school decision-making processes, however many feel that they are not currently involved. All teachers and most students agreed that students should have more responsibilities at school, however, only seven teachers thought that the school provided opportunities for students to develop their leadership qualities.

There were very few opportunities for our students to develop such qualities. In the student meetings, we discussed student leadership at our school. One of the current Primary School Captains said: *'We thought that this was the sort of stuff that they thought that we'd be doing but instead, we haven't really done anything at all this year.'* The students wanted to be given more opportunities to develop leadership; however, other than getting a token leadership label, they were not taking part in any leadership roles. The motivation and enthusiasm of first receiving a leadership role diminishes

very quickly when these students are not provided with opportunities to make a difference to the school.

Students in this study all felt that they had a lot to offer their school and they wanted to take on more responsibilities. If schools want to engage their students, they need to provide them with leadership opportunities where they feel that they are active participants at school.

The Value of Student Voice

Students and teachers equally valued student voice and student leadership in our school. However, what exactly is it that the teachers value? This is a concept that needs to be further explored with them. Valuing student voice is not just valuing the voice of students in small classroom situations. Valuing student voice is involving all key stakeholders in ways that ensure that all viewpoints are heard and that, in turn, lead to more informed decision-making (DeFur & Korinek, 2010).

The student survey has more contradictory results. Over half of the students surveyed either were unsure or did not feel that the teachers valued what students had to say. Just under half of the student population survey did not feel encouraged to say what they thought. There were two different perceptions of what was happening in the school: teachers believed that they were currently valuing student voice but there was a large student population who disagreed or who were unsure.

This means that a definition of what student voice is and looks like at the College may need to be explored with both teachers and students. Student voice is a notion that is continuously evolving; it may be worthwhile to develop a student voice definition as a whole College – about what it currently is and what we would like it to look like in the future.

The Future

The project had a positive impact on those involved. The students who were involved in this study felt empowered as a group, and they became an important part of this change process. They have started to contribute to whole-school improvement (Leithwood, 2007). But this should continue.

We need to continue to hold lunchtime meetings with groups of students to have their input on what a Student Representative Council should look like at the College. We should

begin to conduct some professional learning meetings with the whole staff around student voice and leadership, and specifically around what a Student Representative Council could look like: its structure, a democratic voting system etc.

To ensure maximum participation from the wider community, parental input into what they think a SRC should look like, should be invited. This could be promoted in the newsletter, or through a bulletin board dedicated to this.

We must continue to explore, with students and teachers, what student voice is, and together, as a school community, create a college definition of it and what we would like it to look like in the future. We need to develop a common understanding of this, so that there are no misconceptions.

Having a Student Representative Council can be a first step to developing a leadership program that provides opportunities to students in all primary levels. It can allow better decisions to be made, as it has been established through this project, that students know things that teachers don't. A Student Representative Council can improve student learning and school results; students will feel happier and safer as they have a say.

It was very clear to me, through the time I spent with the group, that students know that they have the right to be consulted and have their voices heard about decisions that affect them. By having a Student Representative Council, this is the first step to providing students with a forum for them to voice their points of views.

Laura Gazeas

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Welcome to VISTA

Ideas for Student Leadership

Welcome to VISTA – an opportunity for teachers to meet and discuss about what is going on in their schools with Student Leadership.

Recently at the Junior School Council Congress, the teachers present had an opportunity to meet during the teachers' session to discuss the **protocols for running a meeting**. We all know the need to have meetings but how can we run them so the students attend, get involved and we achieve positive outcomes without the constant bribery of food?

Here are a few ideas from the JSC Congress that this group of teachers put together:

PROTOCOLS FOR RUNNING A MEETING:

Goals of the session:

To teach students how to run an efficient meeting to meet a purpose.

Ideas for the session:

Brainstorm what needs to happen to have an effective meeting:

- Be on time
- Listen to all ideas (ordered sharing)
- Respectful disagreement
- Staying on the topic

Assign roles – leaders, scribe, 'chair'

- Establish job description for different roles by the group
- Observers' checklist and provide feedback

Set an agenda

- Establish a purpose for each meeting
- Gather agenda items
- Report back on actions from previous meeting

Establish processes at the meeting

- Follow the agenda
- Discussion on items (specified timing)
- 'Motions', 'Moved', 'Seconded' and 'Carried'/'Defeated'

Format of record keeping

- Minutes of last meeting tabled
- Minutes of current meeting including *Action* and *By Whom*
- Safe place to keep the minutes!

VISTA Meet Up:

At our recent VISTA meeting it was also great to have an opportunity to meet face-to-face with teachers from a variety of schools who have lots of stories to share – positive stories as well as sometimes the frustration of being the lone voice. We would love more people to join us at these gatherings – put these dates in your diary **now!**

VISTA Meet Up Dates 2015:

VISTA has planned these **Meet Up** dates for 2015 - keep them free and watch for details on the VISTA website and in **Connect**:

- 5th March;
- 2nd July (School holidays);
- 3rd September (VISTA AGM);
- 12th November

VISTA Website

We also have a website: www.vistasrc.org

It is still a work in progress but it is a great start for teachers who are new to Student Leadership and those who are looking for new ideas. If you have anything to share then send us your ideas and we will post it on-line and credit your work!

Membership Renewals

A reminder that, if you are a VISTA member, we will be sending out **membership renewals** at the beginning of next year. Please make sure we have your current contact details. Email them to us at info@vistasrc.org

If you're not a member ... then JOIN!

AGM results

Congratulations to these people appointed to the VISTA Executive: Scott Duncan, Joel Aarons, Dianne Parkinson, Hayley Merat, Zack Pretlove, Dave Mould.

VISTA Hotline

You can call the **VISTA Hotline** and a member of our team will get back to you: (03) 9013 6773.

Enjoy a relaxing and well deserved holiday and we look forward to being inspired with our Student Voice stories in 2015!

Dianne Parkinson
VISTA Executive

Good luck! Don't forget to use 'resources' that you might have access to:

- Invite previous JSC/SRC Captains back to lead a session
- *Second Strike* run some great training sessions too!!! (www.second-strike.com)
- Check if your local Council's Youth Department offers leadership training
- Check out VISTA resources at our NEW website: www.vistasrc.org

VISTA currently receives no additional funding to operate its programs and relies heavily on memberships to support its programs. Visit us at www.vistasrc.org or e-mail us at info@vistasrc.org for details on how to join.

Leadership training for an entire year level

Are there any outcomes?



Leadership training is seen by most people as a valuable co-curricular program for students, but for *which* students?



reasons they are expected to sit through what seems to them like another school-enforced activity. And they would be right. They've not been consulted about whether they would like to participate in such a day or about the nature of the activities involved.

Secondly, regardless of the engaging nature of the presenter(s), the fun of the games or the innovative technology used, if a program does not appear to have any relevance to students, it will be an almost impossible task to ensure that they gain the benefits expected. If a student has no intention of becoming a leader, then they will not connect with the content.

One question we should ask is: why is it so terrible that only some students develop their skills as a leader through the positions available? After all, only some study an instrument.

Is it possible that each student in the year level can genuinely take on a leadership role without having to resort to disingenuous duty roles that really contain no actual leadership? Such as whiteboard monitors. **Roles of Responsibility** are legitimate in school, but let's not call them *leadership* – students see through it.

If we are serious about **every** student getting serious leadership training, then perhaps a single day, or even two, is not likely to do the job. A program that lasts the whole year, allowing students to reflect upon their growth and take on projects or initiatives through the year, would offer a greater sense of purpose.

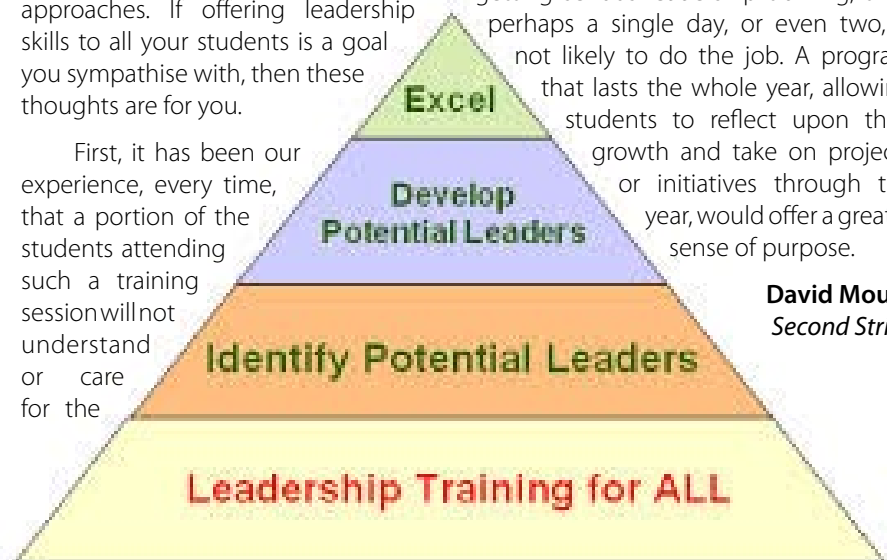
David Mould
Second Strike

Assigning leadership roles without providing sufficient training is an unfair situation to place students in. However, providing leadership training for students who then have no opportunity to practise those skills at school might be equally unfair. Many teachers have legitimate concerns about student leadership roles excluding the majority and creating a notion of privileged or elite students.

Of the range of responses to this being tried by schools, **Second Strike** is currently seeing a large number of requests from primary schools to train entire year levels, regardless of whether the students have a leadership role or not. The main year level targeted as the year draws to a close is that of Grade 5 students, usually in the lead-up to School Captain nominations. As we are given to understand, the hope from the school is that more students will be inspired to nominate for the positions available and a better quality of candidate will emerge. For those students still uninterested in such positions, the schools tend to feel that they will benefit from the training anyway since the skills are important in many aspects of life.

From our experience with several schools across Victoria and New South Wales, our trainers have begun discussing this situation and would like to raise a few ideas and points for consideration. We do not proclaim that we have *the* answer; in fact we don't believe there *is* one single golden answer out there. We do know that engaging teachers in discussions of this nature is the most productive way to find the best approaches. If offering leadership skills to all your students is a goal you sympathise with, then these thoughts are for you.

First, it has been our experience, every time, that a portion of the students attending such a training session will not understand or care for the



Putting the participation back into representation

This article 'from the **Connect** archives' comes from **Connect** 37-38, February-April 1986. It picks up on and challenges some of the ideas about 'credit' for and 'recognition' of representation and participation, taking a more critical and curriculum-based perspective. It is particularly useful to look again at this, as reports and research continues about 'student leadership'.

The article makes reference to the **Ministerial Papers** - the education policy documents of the time. These specific examples can be replaced by similar policies, statements and research findings of today and of other jurisdictions.

There is also reference here to the publication of **Credit and Support** in Victoria (Department of Education, 1986). Copies of this valuable document may still be in school libraries in Victoria, but are probably otherwise hard to find. I wonder who we need to ask about re-publishing it?

This document also appeared in a slightly different form in the 1986 (Commonwealth) Schools Commission publication: **Student Participation and the Participation and Equity Program** (which also may be in libraries).

Giving academic credit to representation contains some major traps. These are not organisational traps – the wealth of available material and the publication of **Credit and Support** will go a long way towards solution of such questions of process.

No, what I'm referring to are the educational traps.

After all, in Victoria we have a statement in Ministerial Paper 6 (*Curriculum Development and Planning in Victoria*) that:

9.1 The Government intends that **all** students have access to educational experiences that are challenging, purposeful and comprehensive and that result in **all** students improving their educational achievement. (*my emphasis*)

and this is further developed:

9.3 The task of ensuring effective access requires that schools ... design courses so that students may participate in each area of learning and are not prevented from continuing their learning as a result of school organisation... (pp 12-13)

To put it bluntly, how can we justify giving time and formal

credit within the school's curriculum to learning activities to which, necessarily, only a few students can gain access? Aren't we just establishing another elite, exclusive subject areas (and potentially opening that area to already advantaged students)?

Let's look at how representation develops. Within a school of (say) 600 students, decisions of the type made by a School Council (school curriculum and discipline policies, resource allocation, forward planning and so on) are generally dealt with at some distance from the forums of the whole school body. A few small (alternative or community) schools have developed procedures by which the whole school community can meet as one and decide

upon policy directions, but such an approach within a large institution is cumbersome and probably unmanageable. Thus forms of representation are developed.

Perhaps there are three students on the School Council and they, in turn, are drawn from and/or advised by a Student Representative Council (SRC) – consisting perhaps of two students from each home or class group. In the best of circumstances, the students on the School Council meet regularly with the SRC to report on issues facing the School Council and, where necessary, the representatives on the SRC return to their 'constituents' for discussion and advice. Perhaps both the SRC and the home/class meetings are regularly timetabled to allow this to happen and are recognised to that extent as important components of the school's curriculum or organisational structure.

It has been argued at some length that both time (to carry out the role of representative) and formal credit for learning are important. Not least among the reasons has been a desire to ensure that no-one is de-barred from becoming a representative.

But that's not enough. To repeat the dilemma: only a few can be representatives; how can we support credit for something to which only a few can gain access? In the approach we outlined above, the representatives on the bodies act essentially as individuals. They themselves are active participants in the decision-making process and are guided regularly by links with their constituents, but they are still not affecting the educational passivity of the great body of students.



There is a way out the dilemma, but it is a difficult and challenging **curriculum** decision. Participation must be put back into representation.

A approach to representation that identifies it as primarily participative enables us to turn the question round by asking: how can we transform the nature of the issues under consideration and the participation process, so that it is necessarily inclusive and common? That is, how can we build the issues into a curriculum that is open to all, important to all and through which, in various ways, all students can contribute to achieving commonly agreed goals? The issues of recognition through allocation of time, credit and support, then become the 'normal' curriculum and administrative questions of the school – ones of goal setting and allocation of resources to their achievement – and student participation is essential to the ways in which the school's learning program is implemented.

In such participatory representation, the presence of representatives upon a decision-making body is only one part of a broader form of participation by all students in the issues under consideration. This will mean the development of regular forums (an SRC and class group meetings) for discussion of issues, in order to inform and draw direction. That's a necessary condition, but still not sufficient. Participatory representation can and should go beyond that, in directions that are educative rather than administrative.

An educative approach regards the many policy issues under consideration to be central to the curriculum processes of the school and thus relevant to active consideration and investigation within the teaching and learning strategies of the school. They are planned as part of the democratically

determined curriculum of the school.

So, for example, development of a school policy on rights and responsibilities for the whole school community would involve, firstly, an understanding of why such a policy is an important part of the learning of the community and secondly, how development of that policy might involve the active participation of all students in investigation of the issue as part of their classroom practice. Various classroom groups might look at aspects of the issue, coordinating their interests through their SRC representatives. One group might decide to interview parents or to draw them into active participation on the policy determination; another group might investigate existing charters of rights at international levels; another might collect examples of practices from other schools, together with processes of development and reactions from the school communities; still another might grapple with the political issues associated with an Australian Bill of Rights. A variety of activities, adopted with attention to age, interest, experience and abilities, would aim to have as many students as possible active participants in issues that affect both their behaviour in the school and the role of the school in its wider social context. Final decision-making on such a policy and its implementation, monitoring and evaluation, would follow as a natural consequence of this education process.

The process of participatory representation becomes concerned with providing a means for improving the learning experiences of **all** about significant issues, rather than either regarding representation as an external **task**, or providing access to a learning experience only for a few representatives.

I can outline such an approach briefly, but of course I can't dismiss the difficulties involved in such massive curriculum re-orientation. Present practices of representation are a stage (and must be seen to be that) **towards** such a broader view of participation. Students **are** still working on these bodies and **are** still being advised and informed by student organisations. Representation is, in many circumstances, a legislative reality and requirement. It is important that, as part of the development of student participation in that curriculum re-orientation, representation of students continues, and continues to expose its needs and opportunities.

Such changes don't occur by waiting until the perfect scenario of student participation can be put into place wholesale, or by solving questions of credit at classroom level and slowly extending the bounds of participation into 'upper levels' only after processes are secure in the classroom.

Change is a more complex political process, that advances jerkily, seizing opportunities and developing in several directions at once. Hopefully such directions cohere – a major issue is to make sure they do. In such a view, student representation in its present (imperfect) form is one more step, an opportunity to be developed towards broader models of participation. And that brings us back to the immediate issues of credit and support.

It does, however, sound one enormous warning note. Not every form of representation and not every form of participation is deserving of credit and support. The measure must be: is such representation aimed at the maximisation of the participation of all in activities that lead to an improved learning experience for all?

Roger Holdsworth, 1986

*(& reprinted in **Connect** 174, December 2008)*



15 finalists, 14 schools, 1 Minister for Education, over 100 friends, family and supporters and a room full of inspiring, driven individuals. The 2014 VicSRC Recognition Awards was spectacular.

The Wrap Up: 2014 VicSRC Recognition Awards

"Some days, the world is either for you or against you. When it's against you, be patient. When it's for you, be humble."

Sophie Williams, Student Leader of the Year

It's not often you can say you're on top of the world. But on Wednesday 22nd October 2014, the phrase was true in more ways than one. High above the city of Melbourne, with panoramic views stretching from Federation Square to Eureka Tower, the Sidney Myer Music Bowl to Port Phillip Bay and beyond, the **2014 VicSRC Recognition Awards** were announced, celebrated and presented. In the Sir Redmond Barry Room, with the city, the sun and finally the stars as a backdrop, best practice in student voice in Victoria was recognised.

Present were the (then) Minister for Education, the Hon. Martin Dixon MP,

representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, VicSRC supporters and volunteers, teachers, family, friends and, most importantly, students. Margaret Tran from the VicSRC Executive kicked off the evening with a great introductory address (*see next page*). Then, time and again, the finalists blew everyone away with their dedication, humour and profound commitment to student voice, leadership and meaningful participation.

The VicSRC received over 50 applications from 28 schools across the state. The 15 finalists were selected

as the top three nominations in each of the five categories. Every single one of the finalists walked away a winner, with prizes to invest in their SRC and student voice activities. You can check out all the winning videos on-line (*link below*) - they are well worth a look!

The following individuals and schools are congratulated for their absolutely outstanding - and ongoing - achievements:

Student Leader of the Year

- **Winner:** Sophie Williams, Highview College
- **First Runner Up:** Jazzy Burke, Benalla P-12 College
- **Second Runner Up:** Isobelle Mannix, Bendigo Senior Secondary College

Group Action

- **Winner:** Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective
- **First Runner Up:** Keysborough College - Banksia Campus
- **Second Runner Up:** Northern Bay College - Peacock Campus

Outstanding SRC of the Year

- **Winner:** Bendigo South East College
- **First Runner Up:** Heatherwood School
- **Second Runner Up:** Swan Hill Primary School



www.vicsrc.org.au/news/movie-time-2014-vicsrc-recognition-awards

SRC Teacher Advisor

- **Winner:** Joanne Howe, The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School
- **First Runner Up:** Samuel Cavnoudias, Haileybury College
- **Second Runner Up:** Dianne Parkinson, Narre Warren South P-12 College

Whole School Focus on Student Voice

- **Winner:** Malvern Central School
- **First Runner Up:** Narre Warren South P-12 College
- **Second Runner Up:** Yarram Secondary College

The Award finalists came from far and wide: from regional and metropolitan Victoria, from primary schools and secondary schools, from private and government schools. They showcased stories of student-led action by SRCs and other student groups, of schools challenging restricted understandings of the importance of student voice, and of SRCs working hard to ensure the authenticity of shared decision-making between students and teachers. The sense of collective purpose and drive was a palpable presence in celebrating each others' experiences.

"Who better to create feminist resources for high school students than high school students who are feminists?"

Zsuzsa and Stella, members of the Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective

The VicSRC thanks the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) for supporting the **VicSRC Recognition Awards**. Thanks are also extended to Second Strike, **Connect**, the Victorian Institute of SRC Teachers (VISTA) and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), under which VicSRC is auspiced. A huge thank you goes to the wonderful musicians on the night - Thomas Vu, Julia Vu, Peter Le and Tien Nguyen, Tess Shacklock and Ayla Scurrah.

As the peak body representing students in Victoria, the VicSRC is thrilled to celebrate best practice in student voice, student-led action and student participation. Events like the **2014 VicSRC Recognition Awards** emphasise the depth, breadth and capacity of students, SRCs and their teacher advisors across the state. Last but by no means least, thanks to all the individuals and schools who nominated for the **2014 VicSRC Recognition Awards**. These continually inspire and motivate all of us every day.

www.vicsrc.org.au/news/the-wrap-up-2014-vicsrc-recognition-awards



VicSRC Victorian Student Representative Council #VicSRCVoices

It is with my great honour that I quote one of my favourite authors, Dr. Seuss: *"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not."*

This quote stood out for me during my years of primary school as I saw many issues which arose in my school community. Things like bullying because of race or gender and inequality amongst peers were not unusual at my school. I wasn't the bully, nor was I the victim, however I was appalled at some of the behaviour that played out in the playground every recess and lunch. This was discrimination and it was bullying - therefore I knew I had to make a stand. As a Grade 5 student, all that I really did was tell the teacher, yet I knew deep down, that that wouldn't solve the problem, and that it was my mission and responsibility to stand up for my peers in the coming years.

As I grew older, I realised that things get done in the world by people who care, who try, and who give their best to what they're doing. When you look around, you'll see that if no one cared an awful lot, not many things would get done and nothing will have ever improved. I've learnt that it's easy not to care about things, because a whole lot of things need changing and it can be overwhelming, but if you focus your attention on one thing, you can make a measureable difference. So the thing that I promised myself to care about since Grade 5 was to ensure that every student was learning in an enjoyable, practical and meaningful environment.

This is why I am part of the VicSRC. This is why you are all seated here today. It is to recognise the great change made by students across Victoria because they **care**. We students care for student voice; we know that change can always be made, but it is the action-taking that is the most challenging thing to achieve. With time, consistency and persistence we can all make a difference in this world.

Today, we are seated here to acknowledge and praise the students, teachers and Student Councils who have made a great change in their community. When I think of the VicSRC Recognition Awards, the words 'student voice', 'change' and 'difference' immediately spring to my mind. 'Student voice' to me means involving students in decision-making in all aspects of education. I believe that involving students in educational matters will lead to effective learning and increased engagement. That is why today is such a special day. We have to remember that there are hundreds, thousands, millions of people making a change every single day, yet we never notice these things. Today we will be congratulating 15 finalists who have been handpicked from an amazing and inspirational bunch of people.

The Recognition Awards are significant because so many good deeds by students and teachers are going unnoticed. We are here to celebrate the achievements of SRCs and present examples of best practice in student voice, student led action and student participation. It is about recognising and then sharing these great experiences with others including members of the education community, principals, teachers and most importantly students.

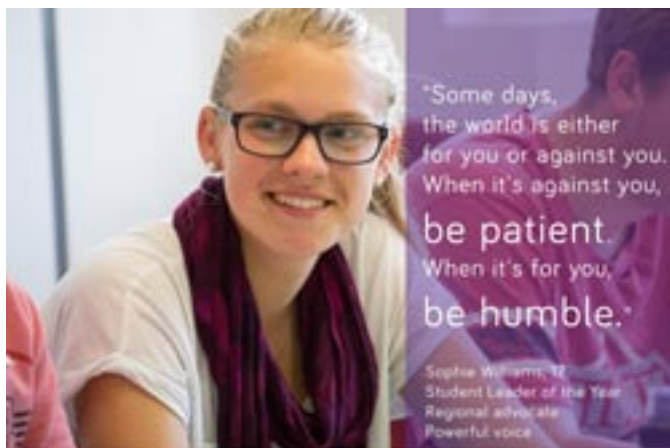
Once again I quote Dr. Seuss: *"Kid, you'll move mountains!"*

It doesn't matter how big the size of the task is, you should never be intimidated; it's just a matter of taking small steps towards your goal. There must be mountain-sized tasks that you're facing in your life and it feels like you'll never be able to achieve anything. However, imagine you actually completed that task! How would you feel? How would it change your life? It may sound impossible at first, but the more you think about it, the more you can come up with ways that it can be done. Just begin chipping away at it, and with enough time and patience you'll see that it becomes manageable. It's just the matter of putting yourself out there and opening yourself up to every opportunity that falls in your path.

Student voice is essential in all schools. It is our mission to continue this journey and ensure that student voice continues to be important in schools. We are the leaders who are making good changes in this world. We need to continue to drive student voice across Victoria, Australia, the world. **We are the past. We are the present. We are the future.** What we do now will affect generations. Every single change that we make will cause a ripple effect in the vast ocean.

"Young people aren't just the leaders of tomorrow - they are the leaders of today."

Margaret Tran, VicSRC Executive



Student Leader of the Year Award Sophie Williams

Obviously with a smaller school and by living in a small regional town there are going to be fewer opportunities to be involved in student voice at a state level. Quite often organisations are only concerned with the needs and interests of the metropolitan students, defining all as one – they weren't reaching out far enough. Living in one of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged towns in the state meant that I had a massive opportunity to help fellow students be heard – I became a regional advocate for student voice.

Being a few hours from the city often made it hard for me to attend some of the meetings associated with the VicSRC Executive, but in saying that I was fortunate enough to have the option of dialling in on some occasions. Time was often something that I lacked, as with a small Executive and just one staff member I felt a lot of pressure to get things done – for example, to be at the additional meetings with the Minister.

Many extra curricular activities in my area consist of playing sport or helping out on the farm, rather than engaging in youth groups and organisations – which highlights an area that needs to be targeted. By living a fair distance from the city I have been able to make friends that I never would have had an opportunity to meet. However, with Year 12 approaching I couldn't ignore the fact that I was going to need this extra time to study. With an education system so focused on academic progress, rather than taking into account community involvement, I had to make the decision to fit the criteria that will hopefully get me into the course I have dreamed of doing for so long.

Many different bodies have supported my participation, but it was not until I had something to show for my time that I received this acknowledgement and support. My principal, and many other teachers, would often approach me with opportunities – all of which I accepted with open arms, and am very grateful to have been granted. The support I gained from the VicSRC was just as uplifting; understanding and appreciation never lacked in the meeting room and office, and that is something that I will treasure for many years to come. My friends parallel with members of the local community

Over the past 12 months I have been a member of the **Victorian Student Representative Council**, holding a place as an advocate for student voice in Victoria. As part of my role I was offered multiple opportunities, all of which I tried to make the most of. I attended the **Schools' State Constitutional Convention** at State Parliament in Melbourne, and following that I was successfully accepted to attend the **National School's Constitutional Convention** in Canberra at Old Parliament House.

I have been a representative on my school's SRC for just two years, during which, in my first year, I was elected onto the VicSRC Executive, after attending my first Congress. Everything was very new for me at this stage and it was a bit of a shock to the system coming from a small country town and walking into the Minister for Education's office. I have also helped out at the **Junior School Council Congress** at Parliament House in Melbourne, facilitating discussion and being chair in both the Upper and Lower Houses for the past two years.

As far as a passion for student voice goes though, I think it's important to actively support what you believe in – and I think that was something that was lacking where I live. It's nice to know that the opportunities for not only students living in my area, but in other rural areas too, are being reached out to by the VicSRC and that all voices are being heard.

Quite often there are times when the going gets tough; being constantly in transition between Melbourne and Maryborough is always hard. I found the most motivating thing was to remember who I was, and whom I was doing this for – what students would gain from my actions. Students in my area never really had much to do with anything that wasn't sport and, although I was an active tennis player and netballer, after attending Congress I came to the realisation that there is so much more that students studying in Maryborough are missing out on. It drove me, in a sense, to open a door for others – to make a path. Because everything is so much easier to do when someone you know has gone before you.



All VicSRC Recognition Award photographs by Piper Huynh, PNNH Productions.

have also supported my journey in recent times, especially since winning the award and appearing in both the *Herald Sun* and the local newspaper, *The Advertiser*. The phone calls, cards and personal messages have been inspiring and have moved me. With the entire town behind me, I feel that anything really is possible if you set your mind to it – I guess I've proven that myself. Last but definitely not the least, the support from my parents and my family has been phenomenal. Without them, the multiple trips to Melbourne and to camps around the state would have been impossible. Although never really telling them much about what I've been doing, they have managed to support me anyway, and for that I thank them.

Although regretting my decision to give up what I love doing for Year 12, I have found other ways to perhaps not spread student voice – but to help other people. As **School Leader** at Highview College next year, I have a few aspirations that extend beyond the four-digit number at the end of the year.

I would like to successfully complete a half marathon in July 2015 at **The Age Run Melbourne**, raising funds for the Leukaemia Foundation. Following this event I hope to gain support from my school and my peers, to enter an all female team in the 2015 **RACV Energy Breakthrough** to raise funds for Ivy's Army, by cycling a Human Powered Vehicle for 24 hours in a relay type setting. I chose this cause with young Ivy having been affected by a rare case of leukaemia and her family left with the ongoing expenses associated with the disease. It's important for me to highlight to young people that not everyone is as fortunate as we are and

that there are young children out there fighting for every breath they take, while we are complaining about our final year of schooling – which in comparison really isn't so bad. It's something that is all around us, and person-by-person, inch-by-inch, we can change that.

It is with a similar vision that I will return to **Vietnam** on March 27th next year with my school, marking two years since I last set foot in the country. I will be revisiting a school that consisted of children aged anywhere between two and thirteen years of age who don't have the appropriate documentation to attend a regular school in Vietnam. These kids unfortunately are very familiar with life on the streets of Saigon and I don't believe that life should look such a way through the eyes of these young people.

In 2015 my main focus, while studying Year 12, will also be on littering students' minds with the belief that their voices matter too and that they deserve the right to stand up and speak out about issues that matter most to them. It is in my role as school leader that I intend to focus on empowering my fellow students throughout the coming year. I also hope to continue my work with the VicSRC in supporting the organisation as well as the new Executive in their roles.



Post Year 12 I would like to travel to Greece, Italy and France before returning home to begin studies at Charles Sturt University in Port Macquarie, specialising in Nuclear Medicine.

Sophie Williams
Highview College, Maryborough





SRC Teacher Advisor Award **Joanne Howe**

It's hard to find fault in her easy going nature, her quick and efficient thinking, her ability to absorb, process and respond to absolutely every word you say, her ability to put up with the SRC wanting to see her nearly every lunchtime or recess and a whole lot more stuff that truly demonstrate her worthiness of the VIC SRC Award.

For us, our hero of the day will always be Ms Howe because not only is she the epitome of cool and easy-approachability but she is genuine and works hard to take care of the SRC family both on the

business side and on the wellbeing side.

What are some of the difficulties involved with the role of SRC Support Teacher? How has she addressed these?

Ms Howe is responsible for a lot of students, not only our school leaders, but also her own class students. To ensure that she is always available to chat to and reach her, she has an unspoken open door policy where she leaves her door open whenever she is in her office, and she also has a small white board attached to her door for students to write on whilst she is away. This is one of the most valued and admired traits of Ms Howe and makes us all feel really comfortable to go and have a chat with her.

Given her empathetic nature, a large number of students also come to Ms Howe with their personal issues. To respect student privacy and ensure that we all feel comfortable to talk to her, she has a little curtain attached to the window on her door, which gives students their privacy, in particular when they are having a cry (as SRC Presidents, we are very much familiar with this scenario).

Finally, as she oversaw the chocolate drive within our school, she has numerous boxes of chocolates in her office. To avoid constantly eating chocolate, she has placed a heavy box on top of them to help her resist the chocolatey temptation. Obviously she has gained endless respect from the Mac.Rob community for this amazing self-control.

Ms Howe is a smart women, which is why she is a role model for many of us here at Mac.Rob.

Nhan-My Nguyen and Taran Giddey
SRC President and Vice-President
Contact: src@macrob.vic.edu.au

Joanne Howe was nominated by the students from the SRC at The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School for the SRC Teacher Advisor Award. They produced an enthusiastic and funny video in support of this application. **Connect** started by asking the SRC President and Vice-President about the role of such an SRC Teacher Advisor.

What qualities and actions make a great SRC Support Teacher?

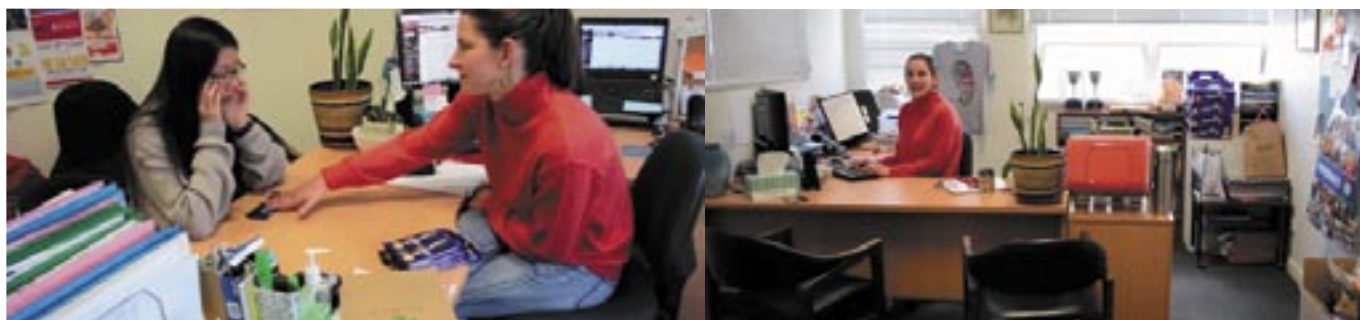
Because being an SRC Support Teacher means interacting with student leaders very closely, one of the most important quality is to be easily approachable. Possessing the quality of being approachable means that the SRC do not hesitate to ask for help and advice and, in turn, it means that the year will run a whole lot more beautifully.

Second to this quality would be to be really zooper dooper cool. A cool SRC Support Teacher is always well respected by the student body because they have the ability to respect students as individuals with valid opinions and ideas - as valid as any other-aged member of society.

So, a great SRC Support Teacher who is approachable and cool, becomes confidante, best friend and family to the SRC.

How has Joanne Howe met these? What does she do?

Ms J Howe has absolutely smashed the ball out of the park being a great SRC Support Teacher. And we say so wholeheartedly with little bias.



Connect then asked Joanne Howe some similar questions:

*Jo, what do **you** think makes a great SRC Support Teacher?*

The SRC plays such a critical role in voicing student concerns, building a cohesive student body, offering leadership opportunities to students from all year levels, and helping students to have a positive schooling experience where they feel connected, trusted, challenged and heard. The role of the SRC support teacher in this is to help and guide the students as they negotiate their roles, plan events, and build their skills, but they also show the students that the wider school community supports their endeavours and is willing and able to help them respond meaningfully to student concerns.

Great SRC support teachers are excellent listeners; know their school, the values that guide it, and how the SRC complements and fosters those values; are strong advocates for student voice; and are open-minded, positive, encouraging, and approachable.

How do you know when (and how) to step forward and to step back?

I usually ask the leaders! I try to keep an open dialogue with the SRC leaders where we all feel we can trust each other and are able to ask for help, advice, and feedback. This runs two ways: I look for their advice just as much as I they do mine. Keeping our cards on the table usually means I'm better equipped to see when they need my explicit support and guidance, when they might need me to show support in the wings, and when they really don't need me at all.



How do you balance support for the SRC with all the other demands of a teacher's life? How is your work recognised within the school?

This can be tricky, absolutely. I am the teacher contact for other leadership and interest groups in the school, and it means I'm not always able to make it to SRC meetings and can be hard to catch sometimes. We try to use email and Google docs as much as we can so that information is always shared, I can access it at any time – and this means we don't always need to talk face to face, though of course we prefer that kind of communication.

Working with the SRC and other leadership groups is a really wonderful complement to what I do in the classroom, and the work that I do in other aspects of my professional life – it allows me to get to know a lot of students (even if I don't teach them), gives me a great insight into what they enjoy and/or find frustrating about school life ... and the students' energy keeps me energised!

Student leadership and co-curricular involvement is highly valued at our school, and the roles that the student leaders, the network of teacher supporters and I play in promoting that is also really valued, supported and celebrated.

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Outstanding SRC of the Year Award

Bendigo South East College

and Student Services Office – which is helpful in reaching students and making announcements. Our SRC office is utilised every day through last-minute meetings, interviews, selling social tickets, preparing for barbecues and catch up study time for SRC members. Our SRC office helps us further our excellence and promote our SRC.

Our SRC for 2014 has been a passionate and dedicated team, and we have seen members from even our lowest year levels come up with some of our greatest initiatives. We had two of our representatives, both from Year 8, begin a partnership with *Thankyou Water*, and have convinced our College's canteen to stock *Thankyou Water* on its shelves. These representatives also implemented the water that the *Thankyou Company* supply into NAPLAN and student-led conferences, providing much needed funds to the *Thankyou Water* initiative. This was a fantastic action by two members whose dedication and drive inspired us all. Our representatives from all year levels were constant sources of motivation, and their constant flow of ideas and input was one of the basic reasons we succeeded as an SRC.

Another focus of our SRC was on **accountability** for our actions. As the student voice body of the school, we ensured that the voice that we projected was the voice of our representatives and the voice of the student body. Rather than having a facilitator that ran our SRC, we

It has been a privilege to work with and for the Bendigo South East College SRC in 2014. Our SRC is a diverse group of young people who share a common goal: to promote and foster well-being and happiness within our College environment. We are a passionate team, committed to student representation not only within our College, but within the wider local, national and global community.

Over the past year, our SRC representatives have been involved in many community events, such as the Bendigo Youth Summit, a Human Rights Forum and have been a part of the Whole Bendigo Schools SRC. We have also raised funds for the Kristy Thomson Appeal, Jeans for Genes Day, the Otis Foundation and a new vehicle for the SES. We have been a presence in the Bendigo ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day Services. Bendigo South East College also hosted a VicSRC Regional Congress.

Our SRC is lucky enough to be able to work in an environment that supports our growth as leaders. We have **an SRC office** that is central to the school and allows us to be close to all the facilities we need to ensure our goals and ideas are met. Our SRC works in a **team environment** with students ranging from different backgrounds and year levels throughout the College. We try to maintain a **diverse** and fresh team each year and promote trust and comfort in change. We'll tell you more about each of these areas.

We are lucky to have a culture in our school that promotes positive and caring attitudes for every student, and this ideal is shown during our team meetings. All

members of the SRC work together, no matter what their differences and that is what makes our SRC outstanding.

We also have an extremely supportive and passionate **principal**, Ernie Fleming, who pushes us to succeed and is open-minded to the changes we make and the ideas we put forward. We couldn't do any of the things we have done without his support to make it happen. We also have the support of teachers and employees throughout the college.

Many of the ideas we have, we run past teachers to get their input. We believe that an SRC isn't just for the students; it's for the whole College and it is easy to reach teachers where we are located in the SRC office. We are also able to reach our General Office

“We have a great plan for the future of our SRC... We're changing how it's run and we're changing the face of our SRC. Instead of doing lots of fundraising, we're really contributing to what our name says we are: we are a **student representative council – and that's what we're trying to do.” (Eva and Brady)**

ensured that our fantastic facilitator, Linda Grinton, had a **facilitative** role rather than a leading and managing role. We, as the SRC, were encouraged and able to run our meetings, and were the sole provider of ideas and input. The representatives of our SRC managed our SRC and ran the events, initiatives and projects that we formed. Our facilitator did a great job of helping us grow as leaders and run our SRC in this sense, and without her help we would not have been able to achieve to the level that we did this year.

In previous years, our SRC has been a well run and cohesive team, but has struggled to get to the essence of what an SRC needs to be: the team for student voice in the College. This year, we had a clear vision set out for what we wanted to be. Our vision was to create a team in which student voice was the main goal and focus area, and where students felt capable and comfortable to provide input into the College.

This year, our SRC has successfully implemented a student voice program that has reflected the wishes of the students who we represent and that works well and efficiently to address the needs of our school community. We are proud as an SRC to be able to say that we promote and use student voice within the college and that we are an SRC that lives up to its name.

We are so proud to have had won the **VicSRC Most Outstanding SRC Award**, and it was a privilege to have even been considered. Our entire team works together to create a safe and trustworthy environment that fosters positive change, growth and implementation of our ideas. We have worked so hard this year to create a foundation on which our successors can build. We believe that we have left a legacy of passion for the education system and our College, hard work in every area of our school life and going above and beyond for the betterment of our College.

With the team we have chosen for 2015, you can be sure to see the Bendigo South East SRC at the next VicSRC Awards Ceremony: **we strive for excellence.**

Brady Price and Eva Marchingo
Bendigo South East College Captains
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Whole School Focus on Student Voice Award

Malvern Central School

- "For me, Student Voice is about the student's perspective and actions of young people within learning and education. Student Voice allows students to share who they are, what they believe, and why they believe what they do with their peers, parents and teachers. I believe every student, who participates in a process of learning, has a voice that should be heard in schools." (Max)
- "Student Voice is a project that some schools run to make sure that their students are having a say in what they do, and allow students to do different things that interest them. My school had this program in 2013. This year, we have combined part of this program with a JSC (Junior School Council) model. Malvern Central School has a much better leadership program this year, now that we have adopted Junior School Council." (Scarlett)

Our Leadership Journey

Malvern Central School is a Foundation to Year 8 government school with two campuses opposite one another, separated by the beautiful Malvern Gardens. The school currently has over 470 proud and happy learners who enjoy school every day. We have a Middle Years component that includes students in Years 5-8. Across the school there are many flexible learning spaces with shared classes and most learning spaces are multi-aged classes. These flexible learning spaces allow teachers to teach collaboratively.

Over time MCS has had many different student leadership models. Throughout the journey these have included **Student Voice**, **Student Representative Council** and **Junior School Council** – which is our new reshaped leadership model.



We have various ideas about what **student voice** is. Here are some of our thoughts:

- "To me student voice at Malvern Central School is enhancing students' learning by allowing students to have input into their learning through a student leadership program. It is about giving great opportunities to students who are willing to be part of student leadership, student leadership opportunities, developing their skills and different experiences. At MCS the JSC gather feedback through various sources, such as surveys, reflections, and general discussions with students in order to ensure true student voice is heard." (Charlie)

- "Student Voice to me is a great opportunity for students to have a say in their learning and the learning environment. Students can give their thoughts and ideas on the school and how it can be improved. After all this is a place where students learn and it should be in a way that suits them. This model also helps teachers and students to work together to bring about change based on what students want. I understand that the school can't provide everything a student wants or needs but it is a good way to see the things that help them as a learner." (Chrissy)

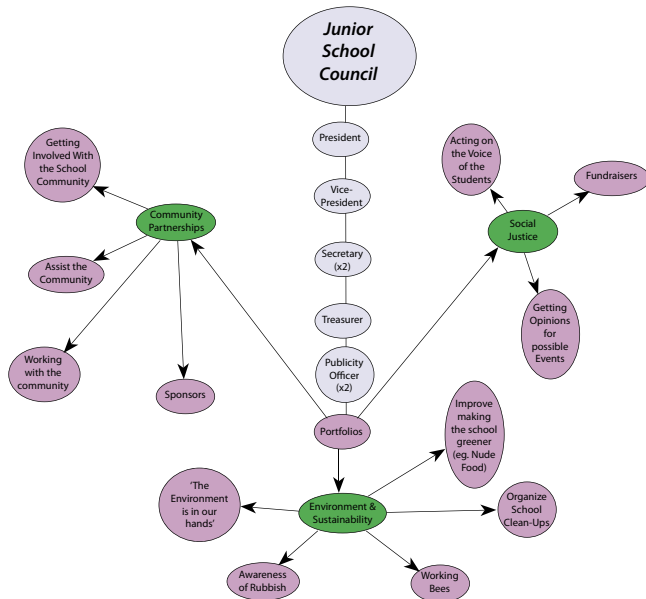


- "Student Voice is about listening to students and taking in their ideas to make a change in the school. It is making sure students are heard and that their ideas are not left unnoticed or ignored." (Emily)
- "It is a fantastic opportunity for students in Years 4-8 to work together and make our school more student-oriented." (Sarsha)

Old and New Models

Before our new and reshaped leadership model, the JSC was called the **Student Representative Council (SRC)**. This model was used for many years ... more than we have been at MCS. The SRC featured a student leadership team of 18 students along with the support of four school captains (two Year 6 students and two Year 8 students), four house captains, four vice-house captains and two music captains. Although school captains were meant to come to all SRC meetings, the house/music vice/captains didn't have to participate in the SRC. The SRC mainly organised and conducted fundraisers for charities, which was great for the community, however wasn't teaching students the necessary leadership skills required to be active members of the school community. Students thought there were no real jobs or roles and nothing was being done to help the school.

Students thought that this leadership model. At a **Teach the Teacher** workshop, students described the model as not



particularly working and being *"only a badge and nothing more"*. The students also described it as *'boring'* and said that meetings were not held regularly. We did not do much other than raising money for charities, having meetings and wearing badges. A review and feedback from SRC members and other students included comments like: *"The application process to get into SRC isn't working"*; *"Students need opinions on School Captains etc"* and *"It isn't developing students' leadership skills"*. The school community took this feedback on board and brought about the reshaping of the SRC program to a **Junior School Council (JSC)**. We had an assembly for Years 4-8 to show them the new model and, at the end, the teachers asked everyone to put their hand up if they thought that they would be interested in joining the JSC; almost everyone put their hand up. That was the start of our new leadership model.

This year the JSC model has replaced the old SRC model. The new model is mainly based on Malvern Central's School Council. Students now recognise the JSC as a leadership role and other students now have a say in what happens with the school. It is a way for students to contribute to their school. Our JSC aims to build the leadership skills of students in Years 4-8 as well as helping the school be a better place.

Our JSC is now a combination of the Student Voice Program, the School Council model and the reshaped SRC model. The JSC

features a leadership team of 22 students (four Year 4 students, 14 Year 5/6 students and four Year 7/8 students). In order to become part of the JSC, students attended an application workshop facilitated by a teacher. Students had to write an application persuading a board of teachers as to why they should be part of the JSC team and what qualities they had in them that would help the school. After a few weeks we found out who was chosen. We were all very excited.

After a few JSC meetings, the teachers in charge of organising the JSC decided that it would be a good idea if we had some training. David Mould from **Second Strike** came in to help develop our leadership skills. We had a few sessions with David before we elected roles within the JSC. We elected a President, a Vice President, two Secretaries, a Treasurer and two Publicity Officers. We went over what the responsibilities of each role would be. Later in Term 1, there was a Badging Ceremony and the Mayor of Stonnington, our local Council, presented the badges to the new members of the JSC.

The JSC now holds meetings regularly and is involved with a lot more than just fundraising. This new model

allows students to build onto each others' ideas and we now get to work together with older and younger students as a whole school. We believe this really helps because we can see any problems or any ideas from many different perspectives. As well as some people having individual roles, all of us can participate in our meetings that follow the School Council structure and proper parliamentary meetings – instead of brief talks planning the next fundraiser or writing speeches for an assembly like last year's SRC.

Training

During the first few JSC meetings we had workshops with David Mould. He taught us how to be a leader in a professional way and taught us fun ways to do it. We learnt leadership skills that a leader should have and how to facilitate. He taught us the process of organising big events and what was needed at these events. These workshops were open for all JSC members and we all enjoyed them thoroughly. David helped us become more confident leaders, showed us new leadership skills such as public speaking and facilitation steps, and tips on how to get people's ideas flowing.

We learnt the different values of becoming a good leader by participating



in activities conducted over multiple sessions. These included sequencing the steps to running a big event with no background information (in this case a school fair), brainstorming what our new leadership program really wanted to be and what JSC really meant for us - as students. We then learnt how to speak confidently by getting out in front of the rest of the JSC and improvising a speech about a certain topic of our choice.

He also helped us make a **Constitution**. We thought it would be useful to write a Constitution on what works and what doesn't work in a JSC. The JSC brainstormed what sub-headings would need to be included. The final aspects of the document were: *Aims, Roles, Qualities of a Leader, Structure, Elections, Making Decisions in Meetings and Breaches*. With help from everyone in the JSC, we started drafting this official document for the JSC. When the draft was completed, it was shown to the whole JSC in individual workshop sessions to look for improvements. We worked hard at it and it turned out just like we wanted it to. It will be saved so future JSCs can refer to it. The document is going to be in the VicSRC's website library, to be used by other schools for their leadership councils. This is the link to our Constitution: <http://tinyurl.com/pj7bts3>

Discovery Program

A larger project that the Student Voice team worked on was reshaping the **Discovery Program** for Middle Years students, where students have choice over the activities they wanted to learn. At the *Teach the Teacher* workshop last year, teachers discovered that students believed there was not enough student voice. Student Voice members conducted a survey for Middle Years students, requesting feedback on current learning programs and on what they wanted to learn and discover. Once the Student Voice team got the survey results, they ran a *Teach the Teacher* workshop with all the teachers in the school. After this workshop, the team decided, with the help of teachers, that they would change the **Jigsaw** program into a program called **Discovery**. All of the 5/6 students who would be participating in the **Discovery Program** came together to write down ideas that the teachers could work on with them.

So a new **Discovery Program** was created. It was based on what students

actually wanted to do instead of what teachers thought students would enjoy. It is now in its second year and it has proven to be a great success. It is completely based on student voice with five awesome activities for students to participate in. Also from students' feedback, more learning programs are now based on student voice - like Inquiry where students choose their big question within the term's units. This is true Student Voice.

What the Student Voice team has achieved

In the JSC, we have three different portfolios. They are **Social Justice, Environmental Care** and also **Community Partnerships**. Though this year is the inaugural year of our JSC model, we have had many new experiences and organised various events:

- **Student Led ANZAC Day Ceremony**

With support from Andrew Plant, author of *The Poppy*, the JSC facilitated the whole school ANZAC Day ceremony. All JSC members had specific jobs and parts they were responsible for. This resulted in a very memorable ceremony that was completely student led. It was our first major activity in 2014.

- **Round Table Discussion with Kelly O'Dwyer (our local Federal Member of Parliament)**

JSC members participated in a Q&A session with Kelly O'Dwyer, asking leadership related questions and getting advice. She gave us tips to help us be good leaders such as having a positive attitude, keep trying new things and acting like a role model to younger or older

students/adults. She was definitely inspirational in regard to helping us develop our leadership skills.



- **Community Partnerships: Tree Planting and MECWA Aged Care Facility**

As a whole JSC, we have had a number of community partnership activities this year, but MECWA and Tree Planting have been the best.

The JSC visited the Urban Forest in East Malvern to participate in tree planting for our local Council in support of National Tree Planting Day. We planted local, native and indigenous plants all over the forest. While we were planting, we also learned some interesting facts about the park. At the end we had a tour of the park and saw a baby possum.

MECWA is a facility close to MCS. We sometimes walk to MECWA to share work or music with the residents. When the JSC attended, we presented some of our Inquiry learning topics to the residents and shared a game of bowls and morning tea with them. We love opportunities like this because we are giving back to our community.

- **JSC Congress**

Two students were chosen to go to Parliament House to participate in the 2013 JSC Congress. This was a great leadership building exercise. We got to propose an idea or a suggestion that could improve schools. Students from all over the state discussed the topic of volunteering. We had to conduct a survey at school about it. All delegates were divided into two groups and sent into the upper and lower house - we were in the upper



house. We were asked the questions in the survey to see what we thought and what our school believes. When we went back to the upper house, one student represented the group and explained the motion that they came up with. That person also answered questions from other delegates. The Congress was a great experience and taught students a lot about leadership and how state parliament works.

- **Organising an AFL Day**

The JSC organised an AFL day where students could participate in AFL related competitions and a sausage sizzle. We all came to school in our AFL, NRL and soccer colours. But it was not just about coming to school dressed up, as four Hawthorn players also visited our school! They came and answered questions for us that students had already prepared. JSC students facilitated the sessions. The players held a mini clinic for the younger students.

- **Round table discussion with our Principal for a Day, Sam Hibbins, about our achievements and our new student leadership model (JSC)**

Sam Hibbins, a local Councillor from the Stonnington Council, came into school to be **Principal for a Day**. The JSC prepared a presentation for him about what the JSC has achieved and how our student leadership model has changed. He was impressed.

- **Planning to facilitate the 2014 Christmas concert**

The next thing the JSC is doing has not happened yet. All the students who did not help with the footy day will be running a Christmas concert! Each class will pick a Christmas carol to sing and makes up actions to it. They will perform it in front of the school and parents. We are starting to pick our songs at the moment and students are looking forward to the evening.

- **Planning to conduct a whole school survey**

Currently David Mould is helping us to create a forum to ask students what they think of our school's curriculum: how we could make it better and what we like about it. We aim to get feedback on curriculum related issues that can be improved to enhance students' learning opportunities.

Recognition Award

We have been very fortunate this year and have had the opportunity to do many exciting events. We entered the **VicSRC Recognition Awards** in the category of *'Whole School Focus on Student Voice'* and made a two minute video reflecting on our Student Voice journey over the previous two years, with a focus on our new JSC model and the final JSC Constitution. Each member of the JSC did a voice recording about one thing the JSC has achieved. We were thrilled to win the award, and fortunately we got a \$1,500 grant for the school and a free session with David Mould from **Second Strike**. All the videos can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/ndyd2x6>

Summary

That is what Malvern Central School's JSC has done over the year. We have more to come and are looking forward to our next opportunity.

When we look back at the year, some of us wrote these things about our journey:

- *"Our inaugural year of JSC has been very successful and I am sure it will be continued in the following years. I have really enjoyed being part of the journey and I've learnt so much."* (Chrissy)
- *"JSC 2014 has been very busy this year setting the rules and protocols for next year's JSC so that they can get lots of student voice. This model is so much better than last year's SRC. More people are involved and we are not just doing charities all the time. I recommend changing to the JSC because you get lots more opportunities and your students can become better leaders and learn how to lead other groups."* (Emily)
- *"Amazingly MCS won the VicSRC Recognition Award, so I got to accept the Award and to meet Hon. Minister Dixon. It was a surreal experience and we were most proud of our Student Voice journey."* (Charlie)
- *"The JSC has had, and will continue to have, a very positive impact on our school. All students in the JSC have become more involved in the school and we have learnt many useful leadership skills. The JSC has made me more confident as a leader and has been such a great opportunity. We have made the school better as*



well because we have strengthened community partnerships and we have given feedback so that the school can improve and become the best it can be. The JSC is a great model that I am confident will continue for future years." (Sarsha)

- *"The JSC has definitely been a wonderful experience. I have learnt heaps about myself as a leader and a person. I have loved every minute of the JSC – running an event, helping local communities or making big decisions. This year, the JSC has definitely made a big difference in the school. Students are having a say in what they want. It is a respected leadership role that is important to the school. I will indeed take what I have learnt to future councils I join!"* (Georgie)
- *"For me, this year's new leadership program, the JSC, and its new model following that of School Councils, has been absolutely, utterly fantastic. I've learnt so much more about leadership than I've had in the SRC last year and have had so many marvellous experiences. Being the inaugural year of the JSC, we have had many fantastic opportunities to build on our leadership skills. When I move onto a different school for high school next year, I hope this perfect, newly founded leadership program thrives."* (Max)
- *"The inaugural year for the JSC at Malvern Central School has been a great one and the years to come will be even greater. The JSC has done a lot, especially since it is the first so we have had to lay the foundations for the next years of the JSC."* (Scarlett)

**Charlie Gough, Chrissy Huang,
Emily Hill, Georgie Green,
Max Maccioli, Sarsha Faiola,
Scarlett Cuthbertson**

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Group Action Award Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective

consider our teaching resource and gender inequality in general.

We're also currently in the process of making a video for other schools, to give them advice on how to start and successfully run a feminist collective. Once our resource is launched, we plan to visit other schools to support them with the resource, and meet other feminist collectives.

Just by existing, we have started up conversations and got young people talking about feminism.

We believe that the founding of our collective, the way we have worked with our teachers as equals, and the opportunities we have taken to speak about gender inequalities, make what we're doing a great example of best practice for **student voice**, **student-led action** and **student participation**, aiming at making the world a better place for young people.

Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective

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www.facebook.com/FHSFeministCollective

We're the **Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective**. We started last year as a lunch-time club after we had an in-class discussion about sexism, and discovered that we all had an interest in feminism. Our teacher, Briony, who helped start it up, then started running it as an elective class, twice a week. This year, our Principal takes one class per week.

Last year, we worked together to come up with concepts for two poster campaigns: one addressed objectification, and the other, sexist language. We contacted, and worked with, designers to develop high quality posters to be distributed nation-wide.

Once we finished our posters, we realised they wouldn't be enough on their own. So we came up with the idea of creating a teaching resource to support our posters, which will enable teachers

to deliver curriculum about gender inequality, to educate and get other teenagers thinking about these issues, and therefore have positive impact on the lives of young women. **Because, who better to design a feminist teaching resource for teenagers, than feminist students?**

We have spoken at a number of events, inside and outside school hours, to spread the word about our feminist collective and encourage schools to



VicSRC: 2014 in Review

2014 has been a year of change, opportunity and growth for the Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC).

The VicSRC Student Executive continues to lead the organisation forward and direct the work of the organisation. Students have worked hard to advocate on the resolutions passed by students at Congress. The team participated in monthly meetings, training days and two camps throughout the year. We thank the Executive teams from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 for their commitment and energy.

As an organisation, our media profile has grown, with over 10 media mentions across print and online publications through the year, and with students commenting on issues that affect their education and schooling. Our networks and channels have continued to evolve, with the rollout of the new VicSRC logo, website, monthly eNewsletter and social media platform in early 2014.

In 2014, VicSRC reached far and wide, connecting with metro and regional students across the state through a series of events. Partner schools hosted 12 Regional conferences with 616 students and 90 teachers from 94 schools in attendance. This marked an increase of 157% in student participation from 2013.

Alongside Regional Conferences, VicSRC also wrapped up our pilot of the *Teach the Teacher* program and evaluation, with 10 schools across the state completing the program. The VicSRC is thrilled to have secured funding for the

delivery of the program over the next three years.

Next up was the penultimate event on our calendar: **Congress 2014**. Held at Lord Somers Camp, with 175 students in attendance (up from 72 students in 2013), a record number of students participated. Four media stories, 15 volunteers, one retweet from the Premier of Victoria and a visit from the Minister for Education later, students from across the state shared their voices and determined the key issues and advocacy platforms that the VicSRC Student Executive will focus on in 2014-2015.

This year has been a year of many firsts, including the first time presenting the **VicSRC Recognition Awards** as a stand-alone event. Our final event for the year was attended by the Minister for Education and we were delighted to receive over 50 applications from 28 schools across the state. 15 finalists were selected across five categories. See *'The Wrap Up: 2014 VicSRC Recognition Awards'* elsewhere in this issue of *Connect* for more details.

Student voices continue to be heard across Victorian policy and advocacy. This includes our continuing participation in stakeholder consultation sessions to discuss the deliverables for key Government policy outlined in the *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community (TVLC)* initiative.



We continue to grow, and this year the VicSRC received an increase in funding from the Department of Education and Early childhood development for 2014-2017. Our finalised three-year organisational strategy is supported by an increase in the staff team from one person to three. Alongside VicSRC Manager **Krista Seddon**, we welcomed **Fiona Campbell** (Communications and Events Officer) and **Emma Myers** (VicSRC *Teach the Teacher* Project Officer) onto the team.

As the peak body representing students in Victoria, we are thrilled to wrap up 2014 celebrating students, SRCs, and schools that are leading the way in student voice. The growth of the organisation over the past 12 months is a credit to the depth, breadth and capacity of students across the state. We have so much in store for 2015 but for now, we thank you for your involvement in VicSRC events and activities, as members and as volunteers. We hope you have a wonderful summer holiday!



Coming soon: VicSRC Regional Conferences 2015

VicSRC Conferences allow students to meet together across schools, to learn from each other, gain skills and work together on common issues. Our experience shows that creating these spaces for students and teachers to meet is a very empowering opportunity for all involved.

In 2015, Regional Conferences will take place across the state from **9th March to 1st May**.

Keep an eye out for more information and how to book: www.vicsrc.org.au

Meet: The *Teach the Teacher* Project Officer

Emma Myers joins the expanding team at VicSRC as the *Teach the Teacher Project Officer*. Emma brings to the fold a unique range of experience from the education sector, having taught English in Malaysia, recruited teachers and support staff, facilitated workshops and managed a youth leadership program.



Fitting in with her desire to build the capacity of young people and their communities, Emma also works at *Kids Off The Kerb*, an organisation using social enterprise to directly assist disadvantaged and vulnerable young people through training and mentoring programs.

Emma holds a Bachelor of Arts (Media and Communications/Creative Writing), Teaching English as a Foreign Language Certificate and is currently studying her Diploma in Community Development. Emma rounds out her week by *Instagramming* photos of street art, eating plenty of Asian food and writing a music blog for an online magazine.



A **resource kit** for students and teachers interested to implement a **Teach the Teacher** program at your school has been developed by the VicSRC. It is part of the **Represent! Plus** resources on the VicSRC website: www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/representplus



VicSRC 2014 Congress Report

Each year the VicSRC produces a report from its annual Congress (statewide conference of students) which outlines what took place and the resolutions passed.

Congress was first held in 2005. These reports capture the background at each Congress, the incoming and outgoing VicSRC Executives and, most importantly, the Congress proceedings. They outline students' discussions for and against key issues and how students voted on these.

The Congress Report for the 2014 VicSRC Congress has now been produced. Copies have been sent to all participating schools and to other stakeholders. Further copies of the Report can also be freely downloaded from the VicSRC website at: www.vicsrc.org.au/congress/congress-reports

VicSRC Victorian Student Representative Council

The VicSRC has rebranded!

To sign up to the new VicSRC online e-newsletter ... visit:

www.vicsrc.org.au/joinin/maillinglist

The **VicSRC** receives funding support from the **Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development** and is auspiced by and based at the **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)**. It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on 1300 727 176; or by email: manager@vicsrc.org.au



Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric

Funded by the US National Institute on Out-of-School Time to Michigan State University, this Rubric is developed through a research study consisting of extensive literature view, a series of program observations, youth and adult interviews and focus groups to assess the practices of Youth-Adult Partnership (Y-AP) in various youth settings (i.e., schools, afterschool programs, camps, parks and recreation, etc.). Similar to the concepts of 'youth-driven' and 'youth civic engagement,' the Y-AP approach aims to increase youth voice and youth leadership in affairs that affect them and their communities.

The Rubric was conducted in partnership with **The Neutral Zone**, Ann Arbor's teen centre (where teens lead, create and innovate). It follows the framework of the article *'The Psychology and Practice of Youth-Adult Partnership'* (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2012) to capture specific behaviours and social climates supporting the four critical dimensions of Y-AP:

- authentic decision-making
- natural mentors
- reciprocity
- community connectedness

Our goal is to provide a freely available assessment tool for professional development and program evaluation. You're encouraged to download the fillable form [PDF: 6.0 MB] at:

<http://cerc.msu.edu/yaprubric/>

and hit the 'submit' button in the PDF file when you're done.



Are our learners deeply engaged?

Issue 2 of *Insights and Ideas* out now!



Insights and Ideas is an informal research journal for the AITSL Learning Frontiers initiative.

Issue 2 shares the findings from their student engagement survey and explores how **Learning Frontiers** – and others around the world – are approaching the key challenges faced by teachers and students. Members of the Melbourne and Canberra design hubs are also introduced and the questions they are investigating explored.



Available from:

www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/learning-frontiers-resources/insights-and-ideas-issue-2.pdf

All about Student Action Teams, including some hyper-linked mini-case studies, at:

www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams

Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group

www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

This open **facebook** group was initially established by Professor Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of 'Student Voice' - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere – as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.



Connect on facebook

Connect has a presence on *facebook*. Find us at:

 www.facebook.com/pages/Connect/360372760717566

We've been posting some news and links there to complement what you see in the on-line version of **Connect**. It would be great if you could go there and 'like' us, and watch there for news of each **Connect's** availability on-line - for FREE - since we started in June 2013!

Take the Lead on Leadership

New South Wales schools wanting to develop student leadership potential now can at **NSW Sport and Recreation's Future Leaders Program**. Kicking off next year in Term 2 for primary schools and Term 3 for secondary schools, this new 3-day program is a great way for schools to recognise and empower future leaders.

Drawing on DEC approved strategies, students engage in leadership activities over the course of the program that facilitate their knowledge and experience of communication, negotiation, decision-making, goal-setting and action-planning. They also work together to develop a **School Action Plan** on an issue that they can lead back at school. Schools benefit as do students.

The **Future Leaders Program** is an ideal development opportunity for a school Student Representative Council (SRC) or any student who shows leadership potential. To make a booking or find out more, contact NSW Sport and Recreation on 13 13 02 (in NSW) or visit <http://dsr.nsw.gov.au/FutureLeadersPrimary/> for primary school programs; and, for secondary school programs: <http://dsr.nsw.gov.au/FutureLeadersSecondary/>



Students as Learning Partners Video

A new NSW **ClassMoviesTV** video highlights the **Students as Learning Partners** program at Gosford High School, NSW. The program can be viewed at the link below. The following quotes from the video describe the program:

- "In the **Students as Learning Partners Program**, we pair up, sometimes with a student from the same year as us, and sometimes from a different year, and we go into classrooms and we observe the teachers teaching the students..."
- "We pay attention to how the teacher teaches the class and how the students respond, and the interaction between them, and write down notes on this piece of paper we are given..."
- "[Students] will take a step back from the student role and be observers ... basically they will focus on how the teacher's teaching the class and whether they're engaging, and different teaching techniques they are using..."



- "After the lesson's over, we then talk with the teacher about how we felt about the lesson and how we would respond to it in a normal classroom environment..."
- "Obviously, from a respectful position that allows students to openly say what the teacher could have done better. It puts students in a really good position to talk with their teachers and have a good voice in how lessons are run."

View this at: www.classmoviestv.com/decnsw?movid=S9068-03-S1133-003



WA Resources to Enhance Youth Participation

Two new publications from the West Australian Department of Local Government and Communities provide advice on how to maximise young people's input and contributions to community life. Targeting young people, they have produced a kit called **'Get Heard. Make a Difference.'**

The Kit contains practical tips on how to get young people involved in organisations and the community, and on how to start and manage youth led projects. For organisations wanting to know how to include young people in consultations and on boards or committees, then they have produced **'Rejuvenate Your Organisation: involving young people to increase your success.'** These publications can be downloaded from the link below.

Youth participation kit

"Young people are an integral part of our community and can help to shape the future of Western Australia in new and exciting ways."

If you are a young person, check out the information sheets in **'Get Heard. Make a Difference.'** They contain practical tips on how you can get involved in organisations and the community, and on how you can start and manage your own projects.

The **Youth Participation Kit for Young People: Get Heard. Make a Difference**, contains:

1. Get Heard. Make a Difference
2. Ways to just get involved!
3. How to get involved with organisations
4. How to participate for a cause
5. Doing a project on your own
6. Doing a group project
7. Tips for handling projects – people management
8. Tips for handling projects – money matters
9. Tips for handling projects – promotion
10. Tips for handling projects – important considerations

Youth participation kit for organisations

If you are an organisation and want to know how to include young people in consultations and on your board or committees, then refer to the help sheets in **'Rejuvenate your organisation: involving young people to increase your success.'** This kit contains:

1. Rejuvenate your organisation: Involving young people to increase your success
2. Important factors to consider for successful youth participation
3. How to conduct one-off consultations
4. How young people can support innovation at your organisation
5. How to regularly involve young people at your organisation
6. Using social media to involve young people in your organisation
7. Planning engagement with children
8. Useful resources



www.communities.wa.gov.au/communities-in-focus/youth/Pages/Publications.aspx

Education needs communities

Wilhelm von Humboldt, the founder of our modern educational system, once said: *"School is a place of reflection on the essential, a free space to explore and develop life-supportive new ways of living."* Self-directed learning is not a modern educational trend; it is part of human history, and, if we look closely, at the core of every thriving, sustainable community.

The question is, how do we recognise life-supportive education? This question becomes all the more relevant when we consider that pedagogy in governmental educational institutions turns toward promoting more self-responsibility and self-management of students. In the wake of this movement, more and more educational institutions want to create a new learning culture.

"Democracy has failed to deliver," says Dr. Bronwyn Hayward from the University of Canterbury (New Zealand). *"We need a new culture that values democratic principles and truly honors and implements their original meaning."* The Senior Lecturer in Political Science and co-researcher at the University of Oslo on the Voices of the Future project, authored the book *Children, Citizenship and*

Environment: Nurturing a Democratic Imagination in a Changing World and examines children and ecological citizenship.

Democratic education as a tool for cultural and social transformation can be at the core of harmonious community development. Examples of democratic education, embedded in community-centred learning environments, show that children who are treated equally and are involved in decision-making processes take responsibility not only for themselves but also for *"the bigger whole"*: their family, community, their whole environment. They also display greater creativity and an unbroken passion and motivation for learning compared to students who are confronted with the pressure to succeed and meet certain

assessment standards when growing up. Research shows that, during puberty at the latest, those students have lost their faith in democracy.

It is time to re-establish our faith in democratic principles and values, and explore the potential of holistic learning methods. How would it be if learning isn't limited to the classroom but is once more seen as an integral part of the community? Community integrated learning initiatives such as the **Education Cities** program initiated by Yaacov Hecht spring forth all around the globe.

In order to build peaceful life-supportive societies and communities, we need a radical change in the educational system. Not only our unknown future but also the current state of global societies requires an original, natural way of learning that involves all senses and real-life challenges so that we can be true to ourselves, withstand peer pressure and the need to fit in, and develop resilient and sustainable communities.

Birgit Baader

birgitbaader@gmail.com



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Interactive presentations, hands-on workshops, forums and experiential work groups offer a space for new impulses and unconventional educational ideas. Focus on indigenous ways of learning and youth voice.



Haumi e Hui e Taiki e

Nelson, New Zealand

9 – 12 April 2015

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Connect now has no income except donations and sales of literature (opposite). By supporting *Connect* with donations, you keep us going. To make a donation to the work of *Connect*, use the form in this issue or contact us for bank account details in order to make an electronic transfer of funds. We gratefully acknowledge all contributions in *Connect*.

ASPRINworld: the *Connect* website!

www.asprinworld.com/connect

Connect has a website at *ASPRINworld*; *ASPRIN* is the *Australian Student Participation Resource and Information Network* ("a cure for your student participation headaches") – a still-emerging concept. The *Connect* section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, recent back issue contents and summaries of and order information for *Student Councils and Beyond*, *Student Action Teams*, *Reaching High* and *Switched On to Learning*. There are also links from the indexes of recent issues to their archived PDFs (see below).

Connect is now also
archived and available electronically:
research.acer.edu.au/connect

All issues of *Connect* are being archived through the ACER Research Repository: *ACEReSearch*. *Connect* issues from #1 to #194 are available for **free** download, and recent issues can be searched by key terms. See the *ASPRINworld* site for index details of recent issues, then link to and download the whole issue you are interested in.

www.informit.com.au

In addition, current and recent issues of *Connect* are now available on-line to libraries and others who subscribe to RMIT's *Informit* site – a site that contains databases of many Australian publications. You can access whole issues of *Connect* as well as individual articles. Costs apply, either by a library subscription to *Informit*'s databases, or through individual payments per view for articles.

www.asprinworld.com/connect
&
research.acer.edu.au/connect

Local and International Publications Received



Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on:

(03) 9489 9052

Australian:

Challenging Racism (WYPIN, Braybrook, Vic) Edition 2; 2011

Learning Frontiers (AITSL, Vic) Issue 2: Insights and ideas

TLN Journal (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 21 No 3; Spring 2014

VicSRC 9th Annual Congress Report (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) 2014

WYPIN Annual Report (Western Young People's Independent Network, Braybrook, Vic) 2013-2014

International:

ReThinking Schools (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 29 No 1: Fall 2014

Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric (Michigan State University, USA)
Version 1.0; 2014

'Student Councils and Beyond' On-Line! **FREE!**

We've almost run out of print copies of the first *Connect* publication: *Student Councils and Beyond* (from 2005). And many of the ideas have subsequently been reflected in the *Represent!* kit from the VicSRC (www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent).

So we have made all of *Student Councils and Beyond* (a compilation of articles and resources from many earlier issues of *Connect*) available on-line for **FREE**. It can be downloaded (as one document or in sections) as PDFs from the *Connect* website. Find it at:

www.asprinworld.com/connect



Articles from *Connect* are now discoverable through **EBSCOhost** research databases.

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 page 34

All back issues of **Connect** from 1979 to the present (that's now **35 years!**) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all back issues of **Connect** have been scanned or up-loaded into the ACER's Research Repository: **ACEReSearch**.

You can find these issues of **Connect** at:

<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect>

The left-hand menu provides a pull-down menu for you to select the issue number > **browse**; the front cover of the issue is displayed, and you can simply click on the link in the main body of the page to download a PDF of the issue. Recent issues are also **searchable** by key words.

Connect has a commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation. We are totally supported by donations!



Let us know

There may be some gaps or improvements necessary. As you use this resource, let us know what you find. (If an issue of **Connect** seems to be missing, check the issues either side, as **double issues** show up only as one issue number.) If you have any ideas for improving this resource, please let us know.

Most importantly, please USE this resource.

All back copies of *Connect* are
 available on-line ... for free!

<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect>

